



# “Congratulations, dear partners ❤️”

**Social media perceptions of civil  
society and local NGOs in the DRC**

May to August 2025

## Introduction

To understand how civil society/LNGOs are perceived within the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) social media space, this report analyses 154 posts and 274 comments referencing LNGOs and CSOs between May and August 2025, using a list of organisations published by the *Comité National des ONG pour l’Autosuffisance et la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CONAFOHD) and highlights narratives around aid agencies.<sup>1</sup> While most posts collected originate from institutional and media pages, the comments provide a broader lens into how social media users frame LNGOs and CSOs, whether as trusted partners, or ineffective actors. These conversations often extend beyond immediate updates, revealing deeper narratives of mistrust, accountability, legitimacy and protection.

## The context

The DRC is in the midst of one of the world’s most severe and overlapping humanitarian crises. By mid-2025, almost seven million people were internally displaced, with nearly **90 per cent** uprooted due to conflict. The M23 offensive earlier in the year displaced an additional 1.2 million people across North and South Kivu. Civilians continue to face violence, gender-based violence, deprivation and the threat of unexploded **ordnance**. USAID provided over US\$6 billion in assistance over the past decade and covered 70 per cent of the humanitarian response plan in 2024, but its withdrawal has left nearly every organisation affected, as the 2025 plan seeks **US\$2.54 billion to reach 11 million people**.

By mid-2025, the DRC also faced 34,000 suspected cholera cases and surges in mpox and measles amid a failing **health system**. In September, authorities declared the country’s 16th Ebola outbreak in **Kasai Province**.

Conflict dynamics further complicate the picture. The peace process between Kinshasa and Rwanda-backed **M23** stalled through August and September 2025, as deadlines for the Doha Declaration lapsed while fighting escalated in North and South Kivu. Armed group attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (**ADF**) and the Cooperative for Development of the Cong (CODECO) also killed scores in Ituri and North Kivu, underscoring the persistence of **insecurity**.

Most Congolese internet users rely primarily on WhatsApp, meaning much debate occurs in private channels not visible to researchers. For ethical and technical reasons, this report focuses only on public social media platforms, where user settings indicate consent for public use.

---

<sup>1</sup> This list of LNGOs and CSOs is not exhaustive, as obtaining a complete and up-to-date inventory of is challenging. Readers who wish to share a more comprehensive or updated list are encouraged to email it to [info@insecurityinsight.org](mailto:info@insecurityinsight.org)

For insights into aid agency access and safety in eastern DRC, explore our analysis series focused on humanitarian operations, food security, health care, education, and community protection in IDP and refugee camps. The series examines conflict dynamics involving the **Allied Democratic Forces** (ADF) and the **M23**.

## Key findings

As part of the better understanding of how social media increases risk to the aid agencies and aid access, this brief examined trust and negative feelings towards local aid actors.

- **LNGOs and CSOs are largely perceived as trusted and legitimate actors**, with almost half of all analysed comments expressing gratitude and encouragement. Users frequently thanked organisations, praised individual staff members, and recognised visible contributions in areas such as education, and healthcare.
- **Positive sentiment is closely linked to clarity and local grounding.** Posts that clearly described project objectives, locations, and results, especially those highlighting local partnerships, received stronger engagement and expressions of appreciation. **Neutral engagement reflects civic interest rather than disengagement.** Around 40 per cent of comments were neutral in tone, characterised by tagging, questions, or reflections on local conditions. This shows that LNGO and CSO content serves as a hub for broader discussions.
- **Negative reactions remain limited but potent.** Fewer than one in ten comments were critical, yet these drew on wider narratives of corruption, and mismanagement. The fact that nearly all negative comments appeared under media posts rather than NGO or CSO pages underscores how external framing amplifies criticism.
- **Co-branding between local community activities and support from international NGOs can prevent negative comments.** When international aid efforts were shared with co-branding communication with trusted community actors, even sensitive topics, like gender-based violence that often attract negative responses on social media, received large positive comments.

This report is part of a series analysing social media activity in the DRC. The series has explored a range of topics, including narratives surrounding [MONUSCO](#), the [peace deal](#) with Rwanda, discussions about the [Wazalendo](#), the ways in which [displacement](#) influences broader narratives of blame, aid, and identity, as well as conversations linked to the [USAID](#) funding freeze.

## Perceptions and narratives on LNGOs and CSOs

The 286 comments referencing LNGOs and CSOs reflect three distinct but interconnected strands of online discourse. The largest share, **133 positive comments (48 percent)**, reveals a consistent narrative of trust and appreciation. These remarks typically thank organisations for their presence, praise individual staff members, or endorse specific projects such as education initiatives, healthcare outreach, or food distributions. Common phrases include “thank you,” “bravo,” and “well done,” sometimes directed at individual staff members named in the posts. Rather than offering detailed reflections, these comments serve as endorsements that reinforce organisational legitimacy through visible appreciation. This consistent pattern of praise indicates that LNGOs and CSOs enjoy a baseline of trust and recognition in the online space. The **114 neutral comments (41 percent)** form the second largest category and illustrate how LNGO and CSO posts function as nodes in broader online conversation. Many neutral remarks involve tagging other users or reposting updates, treating organisational content as a source of reference. Another common thread is curiosity and verification: users frequently ask clarifying questions about the reality of events, who is responsible, or how initiatives will be implemented.

**“Who carries out this activity? Because we haven't received the offer...” (“Qui exercent cette activité ? Parce qu'on n'a pas l'offre circulée..”)**

Others provide short acknowledgements or situational observations about insecurity, poverty, or political events that do not directly judge the organisation. In some cases, religious invocations or general expressions of pride in the DRC appear, signaling engagement without explicit endorsement or criticism. This pattern shows that neutrality is not disinterest but a form of interaction where organisational posts trigger wider conversations. This comment illustrates this well:

**“Well done, but North Kivu and South Kivu are two provinces in distress. Have mercy on the community that lives there...” (“Bravo mais le Nord-kivu et Sud-kivu sont Deux Provinces en Détresses??? Pitié à La Communauté qui y Vit...”)**

- **Though this comment congratulates the organisation, it also shifts to the broader context of insecurity and suffering, showing how neutral engagement often blends acknowledgement with a reminder of the harsh realities people face.**

By contrast, the **27 negative comments (9.9 percent)** concentrate overwhelmingly on salary payments from a single case. Social media users accused an LNGO of mismanaging or blocking the payment of teachers' salaries, echoing narratives already circulating in Congolese media about delays and disputes in the education sector. A **smaller number of users link LNGOs to MONUSCO** in the comments accusing them of dishonesty, profiting from conflict, or even collusion with armed groups. Several comments also frame official announcements as misleading or untimely. It remains unclear whether these negative sentiments are entirely

experienced-based or whether they form part of a coordinated anti-LNGO or **anti-MONUSCO** narrative. Fundamentally, we cannot determine this with certainty, given both technical limitations and ethical considerations. However, when criticism is linked to MONUSCO, it is plausible that there may be more organised or interest-driven motivations behind it.

Strikingly, **26 of the 27 negative comments** appeared under media posts rather than under NGO or CSO pages, underscoring how external coverage acts as the main amplifier for critical narratives. The 51 media posts analysed reached approximately 1.1 million users, compared to just 39,000 for the 93 NGO and CSO posts combined. This difference in reach suggests that critical or negative narratives are far more likely to circulate through media channels than through the organisations’ own communication spaces. This suggests that much of the criticism may come from audiences shaped by wider media narratives rather than direct engagement with the organisations. Media outlets provide a more efficient platform for amplifying anti-aid messaging.

#### Examples of negative comments :

“Fake news seeks out other information to lie to people, not that first.🤖🤖🤖” (“Fausses informations cherche une autre information pour venir mentir aux gens pas ça d’abord🤖🤖🤖”)

“You say ‘for two weeks,’ but where was XXX all that time?” (“Vous dites bien depuis deux semaines, mais tout ce temps passé, où est-ce que XXX était ?”)

Overall, positive and neutral narratives dominate, painting LNGOs and CSOs as trusted and relevant community actors. Yet the sharpness of the negative comments, underscores the fragility of this trust. When dissatisfaction arises, it taps into broader themes of fairness, security, and exploitation, concepts that resonate widely in a fragile context like the DRC. Understanding these common threads allows organisations not only to reinforce the positive narratives but also to anticipate and respond proactively to the accountability concerns that underpin the negative discourse.

## Practical learning from CSO/LNGO posts: Post content, design, and structure

### Example 1: Problem–Solution Framing

- **Crisis framing:** The post opens by describing the humanitarian situation in North Kivu, stressing how displacement, poverty, and violence affect children and adolescents.
- **Solution focus:** It shifts quickly to the response, outlining a 12-month project with clear parameters - timeline, location, target groups, and types of support.
- **Credibility through detail:** Mention of specific health zones and concrete activities shows the project is operational and not abstract.
- **Practical closure:** The post ends with a link for more information and an image of a staff worker, reinforcing transparency and presence on the ground.
- **Impact on sentiment:** This structure, from empathetic framing to concrete action, helps explain why the user response is positive.

As a result, users replied with comments such as:

“We salute the determination of all the authorities who, inspired by this conscious faith, have worked to bring aid to every corner of our beloved Kivu region. May God bless you for the work you have accomplished. It is truly a blessing to have a team guided by a spirit of love, mutual aid and collaboration in such difficult times. Many thanks to XXX for all that you do. 🙏” (“Nous saluons la volonté de toutes les autorités qui, animées par cette foi consciente, ont œuvré pour apporter de l’aide partout sur notre chère terre du Kivu. Que Dieu vous bénisse pour le travail accompli. C’est vraiment une grâce d’avoir une équipe guidée par l’esprit d’amour, d’entraide et de collaboration dans des moments aussi difficiles. Merci beaucoup à XXX pour tout ce que vous faites. 🙏”)

## Practical learning from CSO/LNGO posts: Post content, design, and structure

### Example 2 : Numbers and Optimism

- **Opening hook:** The post begins with a bolded “#BONNE\_NOUVELLE !” (GOOD NEWS), framing the content as good news from the start.
- **Problem-solution framing:** It raises a broad question (“How to protect Lake Tanganyika while improving well-being?”) before immediately presenting the launch of the project as the answer.
- **Specific details:** The project’s scope is broken down with concrete figures, number of decision-makers, companies, and residents impacted over the project duration.
-  Bullet-style checkmarks reinforce clarity and impact.
- **Technical approach:** References to the “circular economy,” waste reduction, and environmental protection give the project credibility and a modern development framing.
- **Local empowerment:** Mention of CSOs and small businesses testing solutions underscores local participation.
- **Broader context:** The post situates the project within a larger programme, highlighting regional cooperation and EU funding. Hashtags further connect it to broader themes.

Clear, upbeat framing paired with quantifiable goals invites users to project their own hopes onto the initiative.

As a result, users replied with comments such as:

**“We truly hope that this project will lead to an improvement and increase in the fish population in Lake Tanganyika by planting more lakeside trees.” (“Courage vraiment que ce projet nous amènent à l'amélioration et la multiplication des poissons dans le lac Tanganyika en nous plantant encore des arbres lacustre”)**

## Practical learning from CSO/LNGO posts: Post content, design, and structure

### Example 3 : Sensitive topics and Co-Branding

- **Author:** The post comes from a UN agency, which immediately gives it international visibility. This is significant because UN-authored content often attracts criticism, yet here it is being used to amplify a local initiative.
- **Topic:** The focus is on prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). Posts on such topics can be polarising, yet the language here is careful, technical, and anchored in awareness-raising and community education.
- **Details:** The post specifies the exact number of leaders (community leaders, NGO staff, civil society members, gender clubs) participated in an awareness session, making the scale of impact visible. It also situates the activity within an LNGO partnership and names local service providers and centres, rooting the intervention in local structures.

This illustrates the importance of co-branding international initiatives with credible local actors. By framing a sensitive issue around community leaders, LNGO partnership, and education, the post managed to avoid the backlash often associated with the UN.

As a result, users replied with comments such as:

**“Together against GBV 🙌” (“Ensemble contre les VBG 🙌”)**

**“We wish you success in applying what you have learnt in the educational session by showing the consequences of these six types of GBV to the community.” (“Nous vous souhaitons une bonne application de la matière réussie dans la séance éducative en montrant les conséquences de ces six types de VBG aux seins de la communauté.”)**

## Conclusion

The analysis of social media discourse around LNGOs and CSOs in the DRC highlights both the resilience and fragility of public trust in local civil society. The online space offers a window into how legitimacy is earned, questioned, and sustained in a context marked by chronic insecurity, uneven service delivery, and heightened scrutiny of aid actors.

Overall, the findings show that local organisations enjoy a significant reservoir of goodwill. Expressions of gratitude and encouragement dominate, reflecting the perception that LNGOs and CSOs are embedded within communities and deliver visible results. This local proximity likely forms the foundation of their legitimacy. Posts that communicate clearly, provide evidence of impact, and recognise community collaboration are rewarded with engagement that reinforces trust and credibility.

Yet this trust is conditional rather than absolute. It is easily unsettled by perceptions of inequity, opacity, or delay. Negative reactions, while few, reveal how quickly isolated grievances can expand into broader narratives of mistrust, echoing concerns about corruption or neglect that circulate across Congolese media and public debate. The fact that almost all criticism appeared under media posts rather than on the organisations’ own pages underscores how limited communication reach leaves LNGOs vulnerable to external framing. In an information ecosystem where media posts reach audiences twenty or thirty times larger than those of civil society actors, public narratives about aid are often defined elsewhere, not by those directly implementing it.

This asymmetry matters. The ability of LNGOs/CSOs to communicate transparently, respond quickly to emerging criticism, and engage proactively with broader conversations will increasingly determine how they are perceived. Digital visibility and trust are now interdependent, organisations that fail to shape their own activities in their own words risk being shaped by others.

For LNGOs and CSOs, the challenge is therefore twofold: to sustain the strong base of local trust they currently enjoy, while expanding their communication capacity and media engagement to guard against distortion. Building partnerships with credible community voices, sharing ownership of information, and investing in digital literacy and monitoring can help strengthen resilience to misinformation and narrative manipulation.

Ultimately, the findings point to an encouraging but delicate equilibrium. Local organisations are seen as trusted, grounded, and relevant, but their legitimacy depends on continued openness and responsiveness.

## Methodology

### What Insecurity Insight analyses on social media:

#### 💬 What is social media data?

Social media data includes original and public user-generated content (posts by individuals, NGOs, journalists, or media platforms) and the public responses to them—comments, shares, and likes. This analysis considers both the narrative set by the original posts and the public’s reaction through the comment sections.

#### 🔍 How was the data collected?

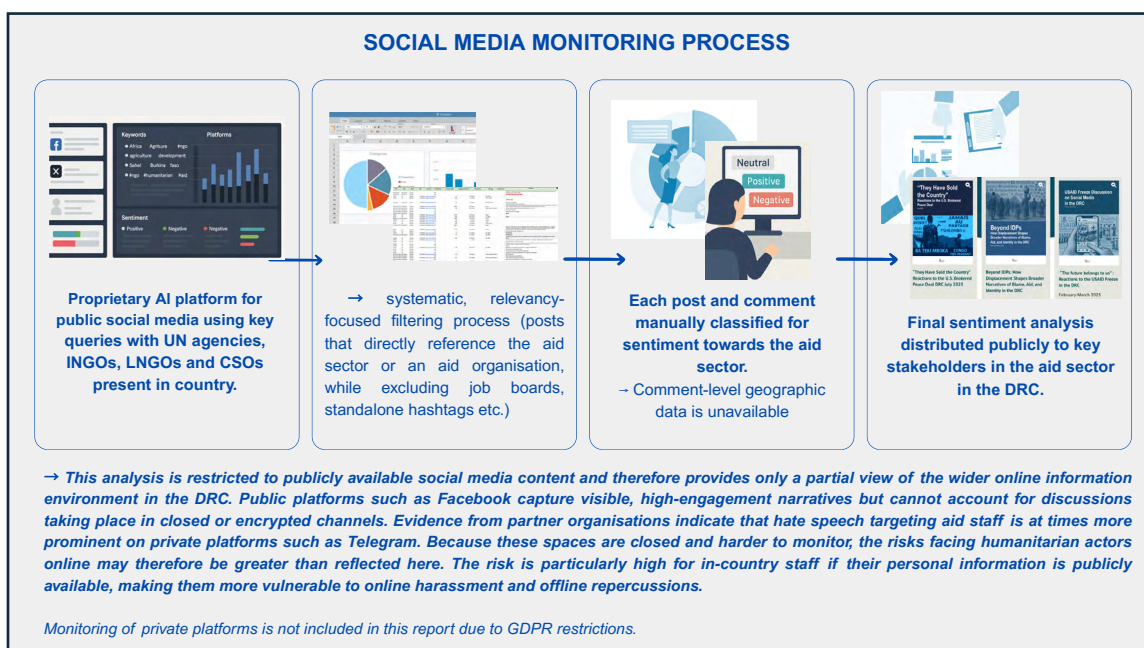
Between February and April 2025, Insecurity Insight used AI-enabled tools to collect and analyse public posts and associated comments on Facebook and X that referenced the Wazalendo in the DRC. Given the high volume of content referencing Wazalendo during this period, only the 33 posts with the most engagement (measured by likes and comments) were selected for in-depth analysis.

Posts shared via private channels such as WhatsApp, Telegram, or private Facebook groups were not included in this analysis.

#### ⚠️ Key terms:

- **Misinformation:** False or misleading information shared without the intention to deceive.
- **Disinformation:** Intentionally false or manipulative content shared to mislead or cause harm.
- **Hate speech:** Language that incites discrimination, hostility, or violence.

All comments were categorised by sentiment—positive, neutral, negative towards Wazalendo as well as the FARDC, aligned with the Wazalendo and the M23, the group they oppose, and the aid sector or the concept of aid to better understand public attitudes towards the Wazalendo in the context of aid policies.



**This document is published by Insecurity Insight.**

The analysis and opinions expressed in this report belong solely to the publisher, Insecurity Insight. Insecurity Insight is a Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) organisation committed to the Humanitarian Principles.

This document is funded and supported by the generous support of the H2H Fund which is supported by aid from the UK government. The opinions expressed in it do not reflect in any way the position of the H2H Network or the UK government who are not responsible for the content expressed in this document.

We welcome questions and feedback. Share what you're observing both on the ground and online. Your insights help us keep the analysis accurate and up-to-date. Email: [info@insecurityinsight.org](mailto:info@insecurityinsight.org). Join our efforts to protect humanitarian space. Subscribe to our Social Media Monitoring mailing list. Find more resources at the Social Media Monitoring website.

Help support our work by sharing this resource. Please copy and paste this link: <https://bit.ly/Oct2025DRCSMMLNGOs>

## **Data Use and Privacy Disclaimer**

This report includes analysis of publicly available social media content collected from open platforms. All data has been anonymised to remove or obscure identifying details, and no content from closed groups was used. The analysis was conducted in the public interest and in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), under a legitimate interest basis. The purpose of this analysis is to support humanitarian dialogue, inform policy, protect aid workers and those they help, and contribute to public interest research.

**Insecurity Insight. 2025. “Congratulations, dear partners ❤️”: Social media perceptions of civil society and local NGOs in the DRC (October 2025). Switzerland: Insecurity Insight. <https://bit.ly/Oct2025DRCSMMLNGOs>**